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OBSERVATIONS

UPON

Mr. SHERIDAN'S PAMPHLET,

INTITLED,

"COMPARATIVE STATEMENT *of the Two Bills for the
better Government of the British Possessions in INDIA.*"

In a LETTER from Major SCOTT to Sir RICHARD HILL, Baronet,
One of the KNIGHTS of the SHIRE for the COUNTY of SALOP.

THIRD EDITION,

WITH AN ADDITIONAL PREFACE.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR JOHN STOCKDALE, OPPOSITE BURLINGTON-HOUSE, PICCADILLY.

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[Price Three Shillings.]

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IT seems to be the general opinion at the present moment, that Mr. Sheridan will in a few days occupy that post in administration which Mr. Dundas now fills, and that he will at the same time succeed him as one of the commissioners for the affairs of India. It becomes, therefore, of infinite importance to the Public to examine, with impartiality, but with freedom, the truth of those opinions which Mr. Sheridan has so industriously circulated throughout England, upon the inefficacy of that law by which India is now governed.

Mr. Sheridan's observations contain *the creed of his party*. I endeavoured, and not unsuccessfully I trust, in my reply to them, to expose the fallacious mode of reasoning

soning which he has adopted; but many months having elapsed since the publication of the second edition of my reply, I wish to prefix to the third, such remarks as recent and very curious occurrences suggest to me.

If I were to be led away by the pathetic oratory of Mr. Sheridan, if I could be so weak as to suppose it meant any thing, I should really believe that so humane a man could not remain a week in office without bringing forward some plan which should relieve the Court of Directors from the tyranny of the Board of Controul, and millions of our fellow-subjects in India from those miseries under which they are now said to labour. But if I am to argue from *the practice of Mr. Sheridan* and his associates, I shall say, that the only consideration with them will be, whether, as *a party*, they shall gain or lose by attempting to alter the present system.

Every gentleman in England who has attended to the political history of the last five years, will remember, that Mr. Sheridan has differed most materially from Mr. Pitt upon two very important points.

Mr. Sheridan, upon the subject of finance, contends, that to enable us to appropriate a million annually to
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the liquidation of our debt, we must impose additional taxes to the amount of thirteen hundred thousand pounds, besides making up for the deficiency which the repeal of the shop-tax must occasion, and finding a substitute for the commutation act, which he has invariably reprobated.

The next great subject of difference has been as to the best mode of securing India to Great Britain, consulting at the same time the welfare and happiness of the natives.

It is not possible to suppose opinions more discordant upon any point than Mr. Pitt's and Mr. Sheridan's have been upon this very important one: but we have had nearly the experience of five years to prove, that India can be retained under the dominion of Great Britain, without resorting to the violent and unconstitutional modes which Mr. Fox had proposed. The difference between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Sheridan as to India, is a difference upon *principle*, as much so, and to as great an extent, as that difference *which formerly divided Lord North and Mr. Fox*. I am not a little curious to know how Mr. Sheridan will reconcile it to his conscience to continue a system which he has condemned in all its parts—The arbitrary, unconstitutional authority of the

Governor General—his perseverance in that mischievous system of foreign and domestic government which Mr. Hastings had established, and for which we marched thirty-five days last year into Westminster-hall—the arrangement for paying the debts of the Nabob of Arcot by the Board of Controul—the declaratory bill—the military establishments—and, in short, every part of the Company's management, both in India and in Europe. A patriot however, has generally a retreat somehow, or somewhere; and that I may not be supposed to argue without grounds, I shall state a fact, which I think will tend to set in a true point of view the *general principles* of that party which the Staffordshire friend of Mr. Sheridan so sincerely admires.

In several of the late newspapers there has been published a character of Sir John Macpherson, as drawn by an historian of reputation and ability. I subscribe to the justice of the character, and can do it with consistency; for I think with the historian, that Sir John Macpherson had great merit in supporting “the brilliant administration of Mr. Hastings.” But how can Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Burke reconcile their panegyrics in favour of that gentleman with their former conduct?

Sir

Sir John was appointed, through the influence of Lord North, to a seat in the Supreme Council of Bengal, and left England in the year 1781; it being known at the time that he had lived on terms of the strictest confidence with Mr. Hastings. He was scarcely seated at the Council Board in Calcutta, when Lord North was driven from administration, and succeeded by the Marquis of Rockingham. Not many days after that event, the Select Committee of the Commons, of which Mr. Burke was the leading member, presented a Report to the House, which I, who have studied Mr. Burke's style with some attention, will take upon me to say, was written by himself. The object of this Report was to prove, that Mr. Macpherson, as a man of deep intrigue, and agent to the Nabob of Arcot, was a very improper person to be appointed a member of the government of Bengal. If the reasoning of Mr. Burke had been true, the instant removal of Mr. Macpherson would have been an act of propriety; and his appointment would have served as an additional article to that impeachment which Mr. Burke had pledged himself to bring against Lord North. But Mr. Burke did not stop here. Another Report was soon after presented to the House relative to Benares; in which it is stated, in direct terms, that if Mr. Hastings's conduct was meritorious at Benares, Mr. Macpherson's unre-

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served approbation of that conduct was so too; but if the reverse, *Mr. Macpherson was involved in the criminality.*

This is fair reasoning, and to be comprehended by the common sense of all mankind. When Mr. Burke moved for a certain letter written from Bengal to Bombay, in the month of October 1781, to be laid before the House, he described that letter as a composition filled with doctrines the most dishonourable and destructive that ever were acknowledged by man; that it recommended breach of faith; and proved, much better than any arguments which he could use, the miserable, the crooked, and the dishonest policy of Mr. Hastings, the writer. The letter was produced, with a remark from the *India House*, that it was signed by *Mr. Wheler and Mr. Macpherson only*. The fact was, that *Mr. Macpherson himself wrote the letter*; that Mr. Hastings never saw it, being six hundred miles from Calcutta when it was written; and I am sure Sir John Macpherson will be able to defend every sentence in it. I do not mention it with the slightest intention of reflecting upon that gentleman, but in order to show the total want of principle in the party. The severe strictures of the Committee were transmitted by the Court of Directors to Mr. Macpherson; and that gentleman, in a firm, a manly,

a manly, and an elegant address to the Court of Directors in the year 1783, defended himself, and did it to the satisfaction of every candid man. He takes great merit to himself in that address (and very justly) for the services which he had performed. He describes the miserable and distressed state of the Company's affairs on his arrival (at a time when Mr. Sheridan has contended there was no distress)—the unexampled efforts made by Bengal to relieve them—the enormous amount of supplies sent to Madras and Bombay—the improvement of the revenues—and many other points which are now the subjects of public inquiry.

In the month of February 1785, Mr. Hastings resigned. Sir John succeeded him in the government, quitted Bengal, and arrived in England in the year 1787.

If, according to patriotic assertion, there was criminality in Mr. Hastings's conduct to Cheyt Sing, Mr. Macpherson, by his *unreserved approbation*, was involved in the criminality. If there was injustice done to the Begum, if the report of her disaffection was false, Mr. Macpherson, who had every opportunity of investigating the truth or falsehood, and whose duty it was to do so, is involved in the criminality; for he has invariably con-

tended that she was disaffected ; and his opinion is upon record. If the plea of necessity in 1781 and 1782, be, as Mr. Sheridan asserts, utterly without foundation, Sir John Macpherson is the most barefaced impostor that ever existed. Mr. Hastings felt the necessity, and contented himself with providing for it : but Sir John Macpherson, attacked by patriots at home, and compelled to defend himself, has stated the difficulties, embarrassments, and necessities of the government of Bengal, at the period to which Mr. Sheridan alluded, in terms as strong as the English language can afford. He calls the attention of the Company, in a most striking manner, to the difficulties which they had surmounted ; and says, they may see “ that an united administration, *under the direction of animated public zeal and great talents,*” have made such exertions “ *as must draw the admiration of their employers.*” Sir John adds, that, before his arrival, the supplies sent to Madras *were great and well-timed* ; that, since his arrival, in little more than one year, that is, from the 30th September 1781 to the 1st November 1782, they amounted to above two millions five hundred thousand pounds ; that the sources of supply were, the increased revenues of Bengal, “ and the severity with which the late “ and subsequent acting-resident at Oude *were called upon to do their duty to the Company,*” or, in other words,

were called upon to procure that treasure from the Begum, which has given rise to the oratory of Mr. Sheridan.

With all these strong facts before them, what steps did the patriots take? Though, by Mr. Burke's reasoning, Sir John Macpherson *was involved in the criminality* with Mr. Hastings, I am ready to allow that there might be many good reasons for not instituting an inquiry into his conduct: but there can be no one reason, satisfactory to an honest man, for what they have done. If Sir John Macpherson was, in the opinion of Mr. Sheridan, a man of honour and credit, how could Mr. Sheridan take upon him to deny so pointedly what Sir John Macpherson had asserted? If, on the contrary, he is not a man of character and credit, how does he account for having mentioned him in such handsome terms in Westminster-hall? Or how happens it that the party are at present so closely and intimately connected with him? Upon Sir John Macpherson, this reflects no dishonour. His conduct has been open and honourable; his opinions have been avowed most explicitly. But that *the party should now support him with their utmost power*, yet withhold those documents which go *to the complete justification of Mr. Hastings*, if Sir John Macpherson is to be believed, is a conduct so monstrous, that a modern patriot alone could practise,

practise, and the most bigotted of partizans only can attempt to justify.

If in the last edition of my reply, I had made that use of Sir John Macpherson's authority which it deserves, and which every man of honour will think due to it, Mr. Burke and Mr. Sheridan would have told me, that I might, with as much propriety, have quoted against them the authority of Mr. Hastings himself, since they had themselves declared that the former *was involved in the criminality of the latter*; that a Report had been made to the House of Commons for the purpose of proving that Sir John Macpherson was a man unfit for the station he held, and that the Minister and Directors who appointed him were highly censurable for that act. But now, after I have heard the encomiums which Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Burke have passed upon Sir John, when I know that they are on terms of the strictest intimacy with him, when I know that their party have supported with their utmost strength, his pretensions to a reward for his services, I have a right to claim every advantage which his evidence affords me; and I say with confidence, that if what Sir John Macpherson has declared upon record as to the flourishing state of Bengal, Cheyt Sing's rebellion, and the Begum, is true, the assertions of Mr. Burke and
Mr.

Mr. Sheridan are unfounded in every respect. Such is their dilemma ; and they will get out of it as they can.

Some apology is due from me to Sir John Macpherson, for having quoted his sentiments, without making use of his own nervous and commanding language. But gentlemen who wish to read the several letters and minutes to which I have referred, may find them amongst those documents which I moved for, and which were laid before the House of Commons last year. They are well worthy the attentive perusal of every dispassionate man. I have, however, thought it necessary to extract the following paragraphs of Sir John's letter to the Directors, dated the 30th of March 1783.

“ Having thus presumed to lay before your Honour-
 “ able Court some account of the situation in which I
 “ found your affairs, and of the measures which the
 “ governor general and council pursued to retrieve them,
 “ permit me to state the particular impression under
 “ which I viewed all the transactions in India at such a
 “ crisis.

“ It was my belief that Great Britain, after the opposi-
 “ tion and separation of America, and attacked by so many

“ powerful enemies at home and abroad, could neither
 “ exist in her finances nor liberties, if India was not
 “ saved, and our competitors here completely counter-
 “ acted.

“ The separation of America came on by degrees ;
 “ and trade, which was our only return from thence,
 “ opened her course through other channels with suc-
 “ cess. America yielded to Britain no landed revenue ;
 “ and each colony there had, like the mother-country,
 “ anticipated by debt the revenues of many years. India
 “ was scarcely one year’s revenue in debt. The loss of
 “ such a dominion, if it was to happen, would be sud-
 “ den—would be total. It would be irrecoverable by
 “ any efforts from home. It would prove the instant loss
 “ of millions of individual, and many millions of the
 “ public property. It would at once annihilate those
 “ funds which constitute the subsistence of all the cre-
 “ ditors of the India Company, at home and abroad ;
 “ it would fall upon the other funds of the state with a
 “ shock that would strike the remotest land-holder in
 “ Britain, and involve him ultimately in the same fate
 “ with those who lived upon the interest of the public
 “ debts. But, to complete the misery of such an uni-
 “ versal catastrophe, our natural enemies, who were in
 “ force

“ force and alliance upon the spot, would succeed to the
 “ remains of our fortune : from that succession they
 “ could maintain their future tenure, and dictate to Bri-
 “ tain the last terms of despotic superiority.

“ No person but one who had once seen the Carnatic
 “ in its prosperity, and who afterwards saw it in the
 “ misery in which I beheld it, could conceive the reality
 “ of the general scene of distress which I have described
 “ as within the possibility of human events. There I
 “ saw men who supposed themselves, and who literally
 “ were, worth princely fortunes a few years before, ab-
 “ solutely in want of bread. The whole substance of a
 “ great colony, the credit of a mighty Company, and of
 “ ally princes, were extinguished by the sword of deso-
 “ lation. ‘ You may come on shore,’ writes Lord Mac-
 “ artney to me the day I came to anchor in the roads,
 “ but if the gentlemen who are passengers with you
 “ come along with you, they must sleep in the streets.’
 “ And where was at that instant the existence of the
 “ India Company? Only in the revenues of Bengal ;
 “ and in Bengal a situation of affairs similar to that
 “ which existed in the Carnatic was to be greatly ap-
 “ prehended ; and had it actually taken place, I leave
 “ it to your own ideas to reflect whether the general
 “ catastrophe

“ catastrophe which I have represented as possible, was
 “ not to be dreaded as a certain consequence. France
 “ looked to such a reversion in your fortune ; and when
 “ you see her armaments prepared upon a scale of force
 “ and expence which is the utmost that her faculties can
 “ send against India, you cannot be too sensibly awakened
 “ to the dangers you have escaped, nor consider those
 “ events as impossible which could alone reimburse your
 “ natural enemies, or give them any prospect of future
 “ advantage from such extraordinary efforts.

“ Such are the dangers to you, and to the public
 “ interests, which proper exertions in the office I hold
 “ might be instrumental to ward off and prevent, or
 “ which inability or wickedness in the same office might
 “ precipitate upon the state. *In the period in which I*
 “ *held the office, and the crisis of that period, no British*
 “ *subject would possess a greater field for averting public*
 “ *evil, or rendering public service.—I became a member*
 “ *of your superior administration of India at a moment*
 “ *when it was a question whether India itself was not to be*
 “ *lost for ever, or greatly saved !”*

In a minute of Sir John Macpherson's, dated the 12th
 of December 1782, in which he also states the immense
 exertions

exertions of the government of Bengal, and the improvement of their revenues, at a period of general distress, he concludes with these *remarkable words* : “ It is our duty, “ if not our right, to be confident that the justice of “ our employers, *and of our country, is ultimately un-* “ *erring, even if it should be interrupted by misinforma-* “ *tion.*”

Of the ultimate judgment of *our country*, I have no doubt : but the preceding history so very fully illustrates *the general principles* of Opposition, that I hope it will be remembered when Mr. Fox is a minister, Mr. Sheridan a privy counsellor, and when Mr. Burke, for a third time, hears the sound of the drum in St. James's Park.

To the good sense of the Public, I also submit the fair consideration of those arguments which have been used by Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Fox in favour of a *strong executive government*. Not one of them but applies *forcibly and irresistibly* to that cause of which, at present, we seem to have lost sight. In Bengal, for a series of years, we saw a *systematic attempt* to weaken, if not totally to destroy the vigour and exertions of the *executive government*. The language which I used on the subject, though ri-
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diculed

diculed by Mr. Fox at the time, he has himself used and applied to a country, the arbiter of Europe, flourishing in all its foreign dependencies, and inhabited by a free, and high-spirited people. With the patronage of the army, the navy, and the church, added to the multitude and variety of offices incident to the collection of the load of taxes imposed upon us, to contend that there will not be energy and vigour enough in the government, is a position that at first sight we cannot subscribe to; and more especially when it is the interest of every man who has a stake in the country to support a virtuous administration. But in India, where eighteen millions of people were to be governed by a very few foreigners, the *executive government upon the spot*, and particularly in time of war, could not be too strongly supported.—Mr. Fox says, and truly, If you disapprove the conduct of ministers, there is a constitutional mode of removing them; but do not cramp them; do not form an arrangement which must be productive of weakness, indecision, and delay.—I said, but Mr. Fox laughed at me at the time, If you disapprove the conduct of *a governor general*, remove him; but do not deprive him of those powers which constitutionally belong to his office, and which are absolutely necessary to be vested in him for the public service.—Mr. Fox, in these piping times of peace,
wants

wants peerages, places, pensions, ribbons, and in short, every thing which the executive power has ever had, in order to form a strong administration; but he thought *a governor general*, who had to conduct a war, to negotiate a peace, to form foreign alliances, and to govern eighteen millions of people, was very unreasonable, because he contended for the exercise of the constitutional rights of his office. The mere name can make no difference. The servant of a company of merchants, if he has an extensive empire to govern, requires at least as much power and authority as the minister of such a free and flourishing country as Great Britain. No man will say, that it is necessary for the existence of the British empire that Mr. Fox should be its minister. The madness of party never went to such a length. But Mr. Fox has in fact affirmed, that to continue minister, he must carry patronage to the utmost extent that the constitution will admit of; and if any part of it is withheld, he cannot go on. I never argued that Mr. Hastings must of necessity continue governor general of Bengal; but I repeatedly declared, that if it was thought right to continue him in that office, when every dependency of the British empire was crumbling to atoms, it would be madness to counteract his endeavours to save India, by throwing every possible obstruction in
his

his way. Sir John Macpherson argued in the same manner. He gave Mr. Hastings his entire support ; and he called the attention of Great Britain to what an united administration, *aided by great talents*, had done. The party have at last listened to reason ; and Sir John's merit is acknowledged by every gentleman who belongs to it.

Mr. Sheridan objects with as much vehemence against the powers granted to the governor general, as to any one clause in Mr. Pitt's bill. He calls them despotic, extravagant, and unwarrantable. I have a right to presume that he will attempt to alter the law in that instance, as in others. It is incumbent upon me, therefore, to point out the advantages which the nation has gained by that law, and to state facts in opposition to assertions.

Mr. Hastings left Bengal on the 1st of February 1785, peace being restored to every part of India ; considerable reductions having been made in the army and in the civil service, in consequence of the restoration of peace.

Sir John Macpherson succeeded him in the government. He made further retrenchments ; but continued the same system of collecting the revenues which Mr. Hastings had established.

Earl Cornwallis succeeded Sir John Macpherson in September 1786, and received the government, according to Sir John's account, "in a condition creditable to the Company, and which must be satisfactory to the nation—the native inhabitants of Bengal the happiest and best protected subjects in India—our native allies and tributaries satisfied and confiding in our protection—the country powers emulously aspiring to the friendship of the English—and, from the King of Tidore, towards New Guinea, to Timur Shaw, on the banks of the Indus, not a state but had lately given us proofs of confidence and respect."

Earl Cornwallis was vested with powers which always appeared to me necessary for the good government of India. We now hear of no factious opposition in council—no minutes of controversy. And what is the state of the country?—Oude is governed upon the system laid down "by the former governor general, Mr. Hastings; or, where an alteration has been made, it was with a view of rendering that system more permanent."

Benares pays its full, clear revenue of forty lacks, without an apprehension expressed as to future balances.

The Company's provinces are precisely under the same mode of administration now as when Mr. Hastings and Sir John Macpherson were in Bengal. The settlements are still made annually ; and it has been found impracticable to intrust the collections in every instance to Zemindars.

These are facts necessary to be known, and necessary to be stated, when a set of men are supposed to be coming into power whose blunders or mismanagement deprived us of an empire in the West, and who professedly reprobate that system under which India has been retained, and has flourished.

A subject which, from delicacy, I declined touching upon in the former editions, I can now mention with great propriety. I mean the story related by Mr. Burke of Deby Sing.

Mr. Burke has told us more than once lately, that he never makes an assertion which he is not prepared to prove. Now, I pledge myself, as a gentleman and a man of honour, to prove, if Mr. Burke will call upon me to do so, that every syllable which he uttered upon the subject of Deby Sing, as it respected Mr. Hastings, was

was unfounded, and that he knew it to be so at the time he spoke in Westminster-hall.

I pledge myself also to prove, that the horrid acts which he stated, and which modesty will not permit me to repeat, never were committed at all, as appeared, after the fullest and most serious investigation which was made and recorded, during the government of Sir John Macpherson.

Why Mr. Burke, after he was in habits of intimacy with Sir John, chose to state as facts what that gentleman could have told him were utterly false, I know not.

Why Mr. Burke has never to the present moment acknowledged how grossly he had misled the world, cannot be accounted for upon any principles which will do him credit.

But as my object ever will be to guard the Public against the artful designs of men who once attempted, under the plea of humanity, and a tender regard to the sufferings of millions, to fix their own power on a foundation not to be shaken, I shall be ready even to encounter the abilities of Mr. Sheridan, if he chuses, at any future period,

period, to draw a fresh comparison between the India bills of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox.

Gentlemen who candidly consider the facts which I have stated, will determine whether "the general principles of the party," as evinced by their practice, merit all that respect which Mr. Sheridan's country friend professes to have for them. Of the worth and integrity of many individuals of that party, no man can have a higher opinion than myself; and without having the honour of being personally known to the Duke of Portland, it is not possible to be unacquainted with his many excellent qualities: but his Grace may say with great truth, what a very wise man, the late Mr. Pulteney, said before him, "That the Heads of Parties, somewhat like the Heads of Snakes, are urged on by the Tail."

LONDON,
6th February 1789.

JOHN SCOTT



